

Delta Vision Strategic Plan Q&A

1. *Q. Who started Delta Vision?*
 - A. Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger signed Executive Order S-17-06 on September 17, 2006, initiating the Delta Vision process to establish a durable vision for sustainable management of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.
2. *Q. Why do we need a vision and a plan?*
 - A. As stated in the Governor's Executive Order, the Delta is a source of water for farmlands, growing communities and businesses, and provides a unique estuarine habitat for many resident and migratory fish and birds, some listed as threatened or endangered. The Delta is of state and national significance. The Delta is under increasing threat due to its aging levee system, regional climate change, rising sea levels, seismic events and urbanization, invasion of undesirable non-native species and a water supply that is not growing in abundance and is subject to drought and court rulings that impact the ability.
3. *Q. Who appointed the Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force?*
 - A. The Governor appointed a seven-member Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force on February 7, 2007, asking them to provide an independent "Vision" for the Delta's future by December 31, 2007, and a strategic plan to execute the vision by October 31, 2008. The task force complied by releasing *Our Vision for the California Delta* in late 2007, and is on schedule to finalize the *Delta Vision Strategic Plan*, also by the required deadline.
4. *Q. What is the Delta Vision Committee?*
 - A. The Governor's Executive Order also established the Delta Vision Committee, chaired by the Secretary for Resources and comprised of the Secretaries for Business, Transportation and Housing; Department of Food and Agriculture and the California Environmental Protection Agency, as well as the President of the Public Utilities Commission. The Executive Order assigned to the Committee the role of creating a Stakeholder Coordination Group to involve local government, stakeholders, scientists, engineers and the public in the Delta Vision process; and to select scientific advisors to advise the Blue Ribbon Task Force.
5. *Q. What happens to Blue Ribbon Task Force recommendations?*
 - A. The recommendations are advisory only and upon completion, are presented to the Governor and the Delta Vision Committee, which in turn, makes recommendations on their implementation to the Governor and the Legislature by December 31, 2008. The Governor or individual legislators

may choose to advance the recommendations through legislation or Executive Order.

6. *Q. Does the Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force recommend changing water rights laws in California?*
 - A. No. The Task Force recommends continued use of water rights laws, including public trust and reasonable use, which are both well-established principles of California water rights.
7. *Q. Will the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) processes be initiated by the Blue Ribbon Task Force to implement Delta Vision?*
 - A. No, the Task Force is advisory only, not triggering the formal project consideration criteria of CEQA. If the Task Force's recommendations are advanced by the Governor or Legislature, some projects may require CEQA to be initiated by the state or federal agency undertaking the project.
8. *Q. Do any Task force recommendations affect specific properties?*
 - A. Not directly. The Task Force does recommend that local governments develop flood plains in the Mokelumne and Cosumnes river areas and also in the South Delta. The Task Force also recommends that effective flood protection plans be developed for specific towns. These recommendations, if implemented with the cooperation of local governments, would have an affect on specific properties.
9. *Q. How does the work of the Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force relate to the other policy processes underway regarding the Delta?*
 - A. Delta Vision operates under an Executive Order from the Governor that was responsive to legislation enacted specifically Assembly Bills 1200 and 1803, and Senate Bill 1574. (Live links on these bills). Another initiative, the Bay-Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP), is a voluntary effort by parties interested in exporting water from the Delta that will allow for compliance with endangered species protection laws. The Delta Risk Management Strategy (DRMS) project focused on levees in the Delta and was completed in response to AB 1200. Delta Vision addresses a broader array of policy issues, focuses on a wider geographical area and looks further into the future than BDCP or DRMS. Those involved in all of these projects seek to integrate information and perspectives while respecting differing purposes and time lines.
10. *Q. When will I know if my home or property will be affected by any of these recommendations?*
 - A. Delta Vision is making recommendations. Most of these recommendations do not focus on particular areas of the Delta and none identify specific properties to change. The recommendations from Delta Vision will be considered by the Governor, Legislature and other policy makers over the next several months. Smaller areas of the Delta may be identified at those

stages. When projects are proposed – for changed conveyance, levee improvements, or ecosystem revitalization, for example—specific properties will be identified.

11. Q. *Why does the Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force recommend changed governance?*

A. An effective form of governance for local, state and federal interests in the Delta has been elusive. The CALFED Bay-Delta Program was formed in 2000 for that purpose; however, the Program's governance structure -- the California Bay-Delta Authority -- was not empowered by law to wield any authority to bring together the many parties and stakeholders that have historically disagreed on how to manage and allocate California's water and protect Delta ecosystems. Nor was CALFED given authority to oversee the more than 220 different local, state and federal agencies that have some form of responsibility or jurisdiction over the Delta. Recognizing this situation, Executive Order S-17-06 specifically called for changes in policies and institutions. Needless to say, with all the Delta's current issues, a change in governance that brings about transparent and effective decision-making with the authority and funding to do so is being sought.

12. Q. *How will a new governance structure for the Delta be different from what CALFED proposed to accomplish?*

A. Many of the Delta Vision Strategic Plan recommendations dealing with water supply and ecosystem restoration are very similar to initiatives undertaken by CALFED. However, CALFED's mission was focused on these two areas within the realm of water only and did not include the broader mission of Delta Vision that concerns the culture, economy and infrastructure of the Delta region or statewide water policies, including conservation and efficiency.

13. Q. *Why does Delta Vision emphasize flood safety?*

A. The potential effects and risk of a major flood in the Delta and were brought into sharp focus after the 2005 devastation of New Orleans when levees gave way after Hurricane Katrina. Occasional flooding has always been a factor in the Delta, especially as subsidence of islands continues and levees surrounding them become more fragile. Growing concern over other factors affecting the Delta -- proximity to active major earthquake faults, regional climate change and sea level rise -- are driving the need for greater flood and emergency preparedness in the Delta.

14. Q. *If implemented, would the Task Force recommendations protect plant and animal species in the Delta?*

A. Task Force recommendations for improving how the Delta functions as an integral part of a healthy estuary are believed to be beneficial to plants and animals by most scientists who have studied the estuary. However,

scientists do not agree on whether these, or any other recommendations, would have a specific beneficial impact on a particular species.

15. *Q. Why is the Task Force focused on the long-term future of the Delta?*

A. The Governor's Executive Order specifically asked the Task Force to focus on the long-term future of the Delta. More fundamentally, species populations in the Delta have reached critical lows because of decisions made over many decades. Water systems designed decades ago are now inadequate. Additionally, climate changes occurring and anticipated—increased sea levels, increased temperatures and more turbulent weather—will have effects over decades. Finally, the major improvements in conveyance, levees and ecosystems planned in the next several years, are all expected to affect the future of the Delta for many decades. For these reasons, a long-term perspective is critical.

16. *Q. Does the Task Force recommend a peripheral canal?*

A. The Task Force believes that dual conveyance — improving the existing conveyance and building a new conveyance dedicated to moving water — appears to be most promising. The Task Force has provided the Governor with several considerations to address while making a final decision. The Task Force recommends relocation of Delta drinking water intakes as feasible to channels where water quality is higher and away from sensitive habitats. Relocating intake facilities or modifying the flow of water within the Delta to effectively draw water from flowing Delta channels improves the quality of drinking water and agricultural export supplies while reducing direct ecosystem impacts. Investing in additional alternative intakes for those users can provide further flexibility in helping change the pattern of diversions to when and where least harmful to the environment.

17. *Q. What does the Delta Vision Strategic Plan say about agriculture?*

A. The Plan readily recognizes that agriculture is an important sector of California's economy. As the largest user of water, improved efficiencies in agricultural water use are important. The importance of agriculture to the Delta is acknowledged in the Strategic Plan and special programs for Delta agriculture are recommended.

18. *Q. What are the key goals of the Delta Vision Strategic Plan?*

A. The Task Force named sustainable management of the Delta's ecosystem and a reliable water supply for California as the most important co-equal goals of the plan. It also named six other goals: recognition and enhancement of the Delta as a unique place; restoration of the Delta ecosystem as an integral part of a healthy estuary; water conservation and sustainable use; improvement of existing water conveyance system and expanded storage as linked goals; reduction of risks to people, property and state interests; and a new governance structure that has the authority,

responsibility, accountability, science support and funding to achieve the goals.

19. *Q How will the Delta Vision Strategic Plan help ensure that California has a reliable water supply?*

A. The Plan recommends actions that are informed by the best available scientific information to advise on a very complex set of dynamics taking place in the Delta. By using science as its guide, the Task Force has made the most comprehensive set of recommendations covering the broad range of Delta issues possible. Importantly, the Task Force recommends reduced reliance on water exported through the Delta and recommends both increased regional self sufficiency and increased conservation as critical to sustainable water supplies for California. The plan does not come with a guarantee; however, not taking action is a sure recipe for failure.

20. *Q. What are the threats to public safety in the Delta region?*

A. Flooding is the main threat to public safety in the Delta region, whether due to seasonal flooding in the winter and late spring, from levee failure caused by the inherent structure of the levees and island subsidence, or from levee failures caused by a strong earthquake on nearby faults causing levee failures. Towns, farms and business are spread throughout the Delta, as are highways, railroads, natural gas pipelines, electrical transmission lines, two ports and numerous bridges and ferries, all of which could be impacted by floodwaters.

21. *Q. What measures need to be taken in the near-term to improve public safety?*

A. The Governor has asked the Department of Water Resources (DWR) and other appropriate state agencies to expedite the evaluation and protection of critical floodplains in the Delta to protect people and property, the existing water export system and the Delta's ecosystem. Along with this, the Governor has asked other agencies to provide policy guidance on Delta land use to protect Delta floodplains. The Governor has specifically asked DWR to improve flood protection, fortify levees and to establish recommended standards for Delta levees. Finally, the Governor has asked DWR and the Governor's Office of Emergency Services to develop and implement an emergency response plan and conduct a multi-agency disaster planning exercise in the Delta. This includes the provision for placing emergency supplies and flood-fighting materials in or near the Delta.

22. *Q. How will the strategic plan enhance the Delta's recreation and tourism economy?*

A. The Strategic Plan proposes the establishment of a federally recognized National Heritage Area, which guarantees federal partnership in marketing and identifies mechanisms to encourage investment in recreational and tourism enterprises. Also proposed is a multi-site State Recreation Area,

which would lead to the expansion of existing Delta recreational areas and provide a mechanism for a marketing structure or incentives. Enterprise zones, which would provide tax breaks or low-interest loans, are also proposed at major Delta gateways. Finally, establishment of migratory corridors for wildlife will improve their survival, including those popular among sportfishers.

23. *Q. Why do non-native invasive species threaten the health of the Delta?*

A. Non-native species have negatively impacted native species by eating the food they need to survive and, in some cases, eating the native species themselves. Invasive plants choke out native plants and clog waterways, requiring chemical eradication.

24. *Q. How will the changes recommended in the Strategic Plan be funded?*

A. Successful governance of the Delta depends on coherent, effective and reliable financing, which currently does not exist. New funding sources and strategies are needed to cover capital costs, make habitat improvements, buttress levees and improve water conveyance. The Task Force recommends that this new system of financing be based on the principle that beneficiaries of improvements pay for them commensurate with the benefit they receive. Bond funds are available for some of the capital investments recommended; however, water contractors must be prepared to pay the capital costs of alternative conveyance. New participants must be prepared and new funding sources developed over time, including maximizing the availability and use of federal funding and ensuring access to all current and future bond funds.

25. *Q. How is the Delta Vision plan different from the Bay Delta Conservation Plan?*

A. The Bay-Delta Conservation Plan is developed under the Federal Endangered Species and the California Natural Community Conservation Planning acts. The process is voluntary, and participants will ultimately obtain up to 50-year permits to operate new and/or existing water and energy projects and provide management and conservation of species covered by the plan. In contrast, Delta Vision is an independent advisory process created by the Governor to determine the long-term sustainable future of the Delta and how to achieve that future. Its recommendations may be carried forward for implementation by the Governor through legislation.

26. *Q. What opportunities have the public had to provide input on the plan?*

A. Since their formation, the Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force has held two-day meetings on a monthly basis, each open to the public and webcast on the internet. Each meeting set aside time for public comment. Additionally, a 43-member Stakeholder Coordination Group represented many stakeholders. Also, experts representing specific areas of concern were invited to make presentations to the Task Force. Additionally, public

comments to the plan have been made in writing, either by mail or the internet, and are posted there for public viewing. In all, there have been hundreds of public comments made in these various ways, first on the Vision and then on the Strategic Plan.

27. *Q. What is the timeline for implementation?*

- A. There is no timeline for implementation of the Delta Vision Strategic Plan. It is anticipated that action will come in 2009, either through the introduction of legislation or by Executive Order of the Governor.

28. *Q. Why is the importance of the “Delta as Place” elevated above the interests of other regions in the state?*

- A. The value of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta is far greater than its environmental and economic worth to the state – which in and of itself is considerable – as the hub of its largest water system and home to more than 750 native species, some of which are found nowhere else. The Delta is home to more than 500,000 Californians living in nine towns and villages in the primary zone; 16 cities, towns and villages in the secondary zone; six highways; five high-voltage transmission lines; three railroads; hundreds of gas lines; two ports; four rivers; 1,100 miles of levees; more than 300,000 acres of farmland producing \$8 billion agricultural output; 290 shoreline recreational areas and 300 marinas. The Delta is home to the unique town of Locke, listed on the National Register of Historic Places as the only town in the United States built exclusively by the Chinese for the Chinese. Its boggy soil was the impetus for development of the “caterpillar” tractor treads used by Gen. George Pershing’s armored tanks in World War I and later.

29. *Q. What is the basis for assertions that earthquakes pose a real danger to the Delta and its levees?*

- A. Two studies reported in late 2005 asserted that a magnitude 6.5 earthquake on one of the numerous active faults along the western edge of the Delta could have the potential to cause 30 levee breaches, thereby devastating the Delta. Surging salt water far into the Delta would also result in closure of the state and federal water projects to prevent salt water from entering the conveyance channels. Highways, railroads, ports and transmission lines for fuel and power would be damaged and disrupted. Flooding of saltier water into the Delta would also damage agricultural land, dealing a huge blow to the Delta’s economy. In this scenario, homes and communities would be flooded and residents displaced.

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